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SUBJECT: FOOD SECURITY STABLE IN RWANDA

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: Rwandan production of staple food crops has increased 25 percent since 2006 as a result of agricultural reforms introduced in 2007, including better distribution of fertilizers and crop intensification programs. Although food production is stable for 2009, dependency on adequate rainfall will continue to dictate food security concerns for the foreseeable future. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) Crops selected for crop intensification programs including rice, wheat, corn, Irish potatoes and cassava have shown dramatic gains over the last three years. Wheat production has increased 233 percent, maize (corn) 168 percent and cassava 268 percent. Between 2008 and 2009 rice production increased 38 percent, for the first time resulting in lower prices compared to imported Tanzanian rice. Speaking to the press on September 24, the Minister of Agriculture also attributed increased agricultural yields to improved availability and distribution of fertilizers, and provision of new seed varieties to farmers.

¶3. (U) Although gross domestic food production has increased, production of some crops declined from 2006-2009. Production of beans, a key source of protein for rural populations, declined by 17 percent, sweet potatoes declined by 13 percent and sorghum by 11 percent. Sweet potatoes and sorghum are staple crops for poor rural families who are chronically food insecure. Typically these families subsist on farms of less than one hectare (2.2 acres). Statistics from the Rwanda Agricultural Development Agency indicate that overall, food prices have increased by 80 percent from 2006 and 16 percent relative to 2008, primarily due to increased exports to neighboring countries.

¶4. (U) COMMENT: Rwanda remains highly dependent on good rainfall for its food security. As the country has had good rains over the last two years, agricultural production has improved and food security is currently stable. Given Rwanda's ongoing dependence on rainfall, however, better irrigation systems, continued improvements in post-harvest storage facilities, availability of appropriate fertilizers and expanded extension services will continue to be needed for longer-term food security. END COMMENT.
CASPER